



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,  
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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themselves, by even an elementary culture of the hand, against the contingencies of fall from high estate: it is so, a many times, that they come under the bitter tyranny of the superfluous pen. And that their sons, oftentimes rejected of examinations, drift away to the colonies and a colonial life, unprepared by even the knowledge pertaining to the right keeping of an urban garden. There is never a journalist, keen-eyed as they are in other respects, to point out to these latter the opportunities for advancement that await the gentleman, who will labour with his hand as well as brain in *England*, the land of his birth and intimate acquaintance. Or to direct their sensitive pride of position to some corner of the British Isles, where it may hide itself, pending the process of regilding, a process that will be more certain of success, less expensive of wear and tear, if carried out amongst conditions of life and custom that lie within an Englishman's knowledge. And the brilliant intellect of the New Woman has not yet perceived that sometimes the parlour maid draws better pay and has more leisure to herself than the nursery governess. Or that the rough hand which comes of toil, may be reduced to a delicate gentility of appearance by a plentiful laving of cold water and an emollient application of vaseline.

## CIVIC AND MORAL TRAINING IN SCHOOLS.\*

MOST school subjects imply not only rules (with reasons where they can be made intelligible) but also exercises. One reason why it is hard to teach history profitably to young boys is, that they cannot "do exercises" in it—that is to say, exercises that are something more than mere repetitions. A pupil learns arithmetic, or Latin, or geometry, by being led up to rules; by seeing his teacher do exercises; but, best of all, by doing exercises himself, with an intelligent knowledge of the principles on which they are based. The most efficacious means of teaching appears to be teaching by exercises.

*Rules and Exercises Needful.*—This applies to moral and civic training. The "rule" for morality—to love one's neighbour as one loves oneself—is intelligible and simple. The great point is—for all of us, old as well as young—the "exercises." Reading may do something, discourse from a teacher with convictions can do still more; but neither can do much in comparison with the "exercises," many of which—for boys at a day school—are done in the streets, or in the train, and most of all at home. "I don't mind your teaching him the Catechism"—said some parent who did not believe in the Catechism, but who was asking that his son might be admitted into a school where the Catechism was, at the time, indispensable—"You may hammer it into him at school, and I'll hammer it out of him at home; I shan't object." The story is probably legendary; but it understates, rather than exaggerates, an important truth. Moral training in a day school, so far as it is mere book teaching, may be excellent in its way, and yet quite unable to compete with the more powerful training—not "hammering" at all, but much more silent, persistent, and efficacious—of the out-of-school world. I make no apology, then, for speaking first of "exercises" in morality, although there is nothing novel in this part of the subject. If teachers were waiting to give moral and civic

\* The following paper was read by the REV. DR. ABBOTT, late Head Master of the City of London School, at the Conference of the N.U.T. in the Merchant Taylor's School, Charterhouse-square, London and afterwards read before the Hampstead Branch of the P.N.E.U.



training until the publication of some authoritative text-book on it, I am convinced that it would never be given. The text-book might be published, but it would be sure to disappoint expectations. If we cannot make a considerable use of the instruments at our command, no new instrument is likely to help as much. My impression is that our present means may be better used than they have been; and, therefore, though I shall touch on the introduction of new means, I shall lay most stress upon the improved use of the old. But bearing in mind that many of my suggestions may have been anticipated by others who have long acted on them, I will ask you to excuse me if I state points briefly, rather as subjects for discussion than as defined conclusions.

*Parental Co-operation.*—First, then, what means are there of securing the co-operation of parents, and can they be improved? Are there monthly or other reports sent home to them? If there are not, and if there is a general feeling that this would be useful in itself, but more than counter-balanced by the increased burden of secretarial work, already perhaps too heavy, could not the secretarial assistance be increased? I have heard that the principals of some schools encourage meetings of parents now and then at the school, in pre-arranged groups, to talk over school matters with the teachers: is this practicable? A society was established some years now, called the "Parents' National Educational Union," one object of which is "to secure greater unity and continuity of education by harmonising home and school training." How far can such a society be useful? And, if it can be of use, can we co-operate with it?

*Drill and Machine-like Rules.*—Next, as to training in the school itself. We all know that if the tone of a school is to be good, the teacher must be in touch with his pupils, realising their individual difficulties and temptations, appreciating their efforts, and understanding and making allowance for—even while firmly punishing—their faults. But this cannot be done if the teacher's time is wholly taken up with preparing pupils for examinations, or if he is distracted between many classes. Lecturers do good work, but lecturers cannot give training in morality; and a teacher of many classes tends to become a lecturer. Where a teacher's attention is thus distracted (and there are many intellectual

advantages to be pleaded for the system which thus utilises specialists as teachers), it becomes desirable that a group of boys should be attached during the term to some one master whom they may consult as their friend in troubles and difficulties, and to whom they must present regular reports of their work and conduct. If a teacher has not time or opportunity for acquiring more than a mere intellectual knowledge of the pupils under his care, the moral loss to them is very great. An over-worked teacher tends to become a machine, and a teaching machine produces in its pupils machine-like learning, and machine-like morals.

Not, indeed, that I underrate the minor and mechanical habits of punctuality, neatness, orderliness, and general attention to things seemly. Drill, in itself, exercises a good influence, though much depends upon the spirit of the drill and character of the instructor; but these small habits also constitute a kind of drill, which strengthens the mind, increases energy, self-respect, and self-control, and forms a kind of bulwark or outer circle to resist attacks against morality. And how often it happens that the mere mechanical arrangements of a school, or part of a school, fight, so to speak, against these minor moralities! Ill-constructed passages, or staircases, or lavatories, or cloak-rooms, or ill-devised arrangements in connection with them—how often do they encourage disorder, bullying, dishonesty, suspicion of dishonesty, and a generally bad tone! I have often seen, and still sometimes see, young boys emerging from school into the street, who regularly act as though there were no accommodation for decency in the school, and whose conduct toward one another would certainly not suggest that in that very afternoon they had been receiving a lesson on the Sermon on the Mount. Certainly, therefore, so far from underrating the machine-like routine of ordinary school discipline, I am of one mind with the head master of the most successful day school in London—or, I may say, in England—who told me that, in a former school of his, the chairman of his council, after visiting the classrooms, was in the habit of saying, "I don't believe much good is being done in Mr. So-and-so's room; there's too much paper on the floor"; "and," continued the head master, "the chairman was right"; and I say now, too, as I said then, "the chairman was right." And I wish I could induce all the



members of my profession, especially the untrained members, to believe in that chairman.

But, still, while enforcing exact obedience to school rules, you must not—under penalty of becoming a martinet yourself, and inflicting great injury on your pupils—neglect to remind yourself constantly that these small school rules are but means to a great end. You may inculcate discipline and order as means for getting on in life (and I am by no means disposed to deny that for boys of a certain kind and at a certain stage that argument may sometimes be rightly used), but, as a basis for morality, they must be enforced on the ground of the good of the school—the common good. If the young can be made to recognise that the school rules are for the school's interest, then, and not till then, in the simplest actions of school routine, by giving a willing and intelligent obedience, they are being imperceptibly imbued with that habit of subordinating private inclinations to public benefit, which is one of the best means of preparing a boy in a school to become a citizen in a state.

*The Teachers must be Just.*—But, now, to pass from the “exercises” of the pupils to those of the master. They are, of course, not direct or deliberate, not even conscious for the most part; but, for this very reason, they are often most effective, when they naturally and spontaneously spring out of his management and control of the class. I sometimes think a teacher might do more for the morality of his pupils than he is aware by paying an absolute and almost punctilious respect to their rights, and by consulting the wishes of the majority on small occasions where no harm can be done. To keep pupils over time, because you are greatly interested in a lesson, is a mark of zeal; to do it because you came into the class-room after your time is a mark of penitence; but in neither case is it quite fair. Again, if boys are fined for dropping paper or leaving books about, is it altogether Quixotic that a master should himself contribute to the fine fund for similar offences? Then, as regards the administration of justice and punishment of faults, although the pressure of work in a great school prevents nice discriminations and lengthy inquiries, still, the habit of always allowing an appeal (after lesson), even to the perpetrator of seventy-times-seven offences, is so valuable to our pupils as to be worth some

expense of a master's time and energy. Some masters think it right to punish a whole class for the fault of one or two undetected pupils in it. I would not go so far as to say that it is not right; but I am pretty sure that it is not wise. For the same result can be obtained by holding an investigation after school hours, at which, of course, you require the attendance of the whole class for the purpose of giving evidence. Thus you inconvenience the whole class, as also you inconvenience yourself; but you do not treat the whole class as guilty any more than you treat yourself as guilty. The lesson to be deduced from these natural inconveniences is that if one member of a body goes wrong, the whole of the body is liable to suffer; and this is a profound moral and civic truth well worth inculcating in practice. But it is all lost if you arbitrarily say, “Since I cannot detect the one offender in a class of forty, I will punish thirty-nine innocent boys simply that I may punish one guilty one?” I lay the more stress upon justice because it is the one virtue that is open to all teachers to practise, and easy for all pupils to understand and respect. Many teachers are so shy and reserved, or so afraid of being partial or indulgent, that they cannot make themselves liked; but they can all make themselves respected if they are just. No lessons on morals are of much use from a master who is not respected by his pupils; but a perfectly just teacher, even though he may give no moral lessons, is a great indirect teacher of morality.

*Discrimination.*—Discrimination between offences, and adaptation of punishments to faults, are excellent “moral exercises,” and it is needless to dwell on the mischief that would arise if no more severe punishment could be inflicted on dishonesty and indecency than on inattention, carelessness, or unpunctuality. For this reason, if for no other, I am disposed to think that corporal punishment should be regularly used, to draw a line, intelligible to the whole school, between the graver and the lighter faults. I have grown to dislike inflicting corporal punishment more and more; yet, if I were to begin a schoolmaster's life over again, I would do one of two things, I would either cane more often than I did, or else I would introduce a substitute of the following kind: I would try the experiment of a *concordat*, a compact with my pupils after this fashion: “So-and-so has lowered the character of



the school by committing such-and-such an offence, and deserves to be caned; but I should much prefer not to cane him if the boys will punish him themselves by not speaking to him for a week. If the boys do this, I shall not punish him myself in any way. So many as promise this, hold up their hands." Great care would be needed at first to ensure that the boys keep their promise, but if they did, and if it became a school tradition, I think it would be an excellent tradition. The experiment has perhaps been tried by many here present; if not, it seems worth trying.

*Corporal Punishment in Schools.*—Meantime, greatly though we may dislike inflicting corporal punishment, it is our duty to inflict it, for it is for the good of the school as a whole. From an interesting Report of Mr. Fitch on American Schools, published last year, I learn that "in most of the state and city regulations teachers are absolutely forbidden to inflict it"; and that is a point well worth considering. One would like to know what punishments are reserved for graver offences; whether the teachers themselves acquiesce in this restriction; whether they are satisfied with the tone and morality of their pupils, as well as with the outward order and discipline which favourably impressed Mr. Fitch; and whether there is, owing to national character and circumstances, an earlier seriousness and sense of responsibility among boys at school and young men at the universities in the United States. It may be we can learn something from a fuller knowledge of what is done elsewhere. But meantime, I hope none of my fellow-teachers will be deterred from their duty by mere abstract arguments apart from facts. "Caning brutalises a boy," people say. I do not believe it does, unless a brute holds the cane. But, if it did, bullying, falsehood, dishonesty, and indecency, do worse than brutalise him; and not only him, but also the innocent companions among whom he is spreading the infection of his evil habits. Under proper regulations, and in the hands of experienced and responsible teachers, the cane seems to me an instrument for good in English schools as at present constituted; and if, as I believe, this is the general opinion not only of school teachers but also of school managers, it seems time that some pressure should be brought to bear upon those magistrates who set their faces against caning under any circumstances. The

magistrate's son, if he went to a public school, would be freely birched in some schools or caned in others, and if the father dared to utter a word of remonstrance against an ordinary caning, he would be ridiculed by his old school-fellows and friends, repudiated by his own son, and rebuffed in any appeal to the laws. In the elementary schools, the work of maintaining discipline and morality is probably far more laborious than in the schools of the wealthy; surely, therefore, it is monstrous that a punishment freely allowed in the latter should be denied to the former—and this not by any recognised interpretation of the laws, but by an eccentric and capricious abuse of the power of a local magistrate!

In the infliction of all punishments, corporal or otherwise, the old and humane caution of Deuteronomy is ever to be present with us. There is to be a limit to the number of stripes, "that thy brother may not seem vile unto thee." The young teacher should bear this in mind in the infliction of metaphorical as well as literal stripes. We sometimes resort to reproach or sarcasm with the view of stimulating without punishing; and too often, without knowing it, we have exceeded the forty stripes and made our brother "vile," not perhaps in our eyes, but in the eyes of his schoolfellows and his own. That is a sad mistake. If we are to imbue boys with the spirit of morality, it is essential that they should count no one "vile"; they must be taught to believe that there is some good in every one—some good even in the worst of their school-fellows. Whether they believe this or not will largely depend upon you; upon your faith in human nature and upon your power of manifesting that faith in action.

*What we Teach.—New Means and Methods.*—But it is time to pass from moral "exercises" to moral "rules." I have omitted much that seemed inapplicable to day schools for young boys—organized school games, debating societies, schools clubs, and the like. Any defects in this part of my subject will be supplied, I hope, by subsequent speakers. Let us come now to "rules," and "reasons for rules," that is to say, direct teaching bearing on moral and civic duty. Under this head we may consider, first, what we teach at present, and whether we might teach that better; and secondly new means and methods of teaching.

Direct moral instruction, apart from that which is based



on Scripture lessons, should not, I think, be given frequently, nor even regularly, lest it should come to be taken as a matter of course and become stale and flat. The most impressive teaching of this kind can often be given in the way of warning, when something has gone wrong in the school. But it is not well, either, to delay giving one's pupils guidance till some of them have gone astray. At the beginning of each term the head master with the whole school, and class masters with their several classes, have an opportunity of giving direct moral instruction which is likely to have good and permanent results if masters can speak with conviction. The topics will be always open to variety of illustration based on the experience of the preceding term, but in themselves they will be always much the same. How the welfare and happiness of the whole school depend upon the good conduct of each member of it; how the disorder and mischievousness of a few may disturb and trouble the many; how unfairness, and cheating, and dishonesty in school work, as well as in other things, infect the atmosphere of the whole school, vitiate the relations between boys and masters, and drive away the spirit of frank confidence and friendliness which should bind all together; and how much a majority of well disposed boys might do by remonstrance and moral or other pressure to put down those mean and dishonest tricks which they ought no more to tolerate in school work than in school games—these subjects, term after term, will reappear, and may be so handled as to perceptibly improve the tone of the school for a time. Presently there will be a reaction, and another such lay-sermon will be needed—and the best of such sermons must never tempt the preacher of them to dispense with constant watchfulness or to imagine that they furnish a substitute for sympathy between teacher and pupil.

"*Impurity.*"—We all dislike—perhaps too much dislike—to warn boys beforehand against indecent and impure language and habits. It is a painful, but I fear a necessary, duty. But such warnings should be brief; and argument, I think, should have but little part in them. Boys may be told that impure words lead to impure deeds, which sometimes bring disease on body and mind, as well as on the soul; but, for the rest, I would no more argue with boys about the mischief of un-

clean language than about the mischief of dirty hands or faces. I have always, hitherto, held aloof from social efforts in this direction; and even now I intensely dislike the notion that purity requires a society to encourage it. But, if I were to begin a schoolmaster's life again, I think I should support, even in a day school, the formation of a society which had for its object the suppression of anything unseemly or indecent by remonstrance in the first instance; by social excommunication in the second; and, as a last resort, by reporting to the master.

*Bible Teaching.*—I pass now to the teaching of the Bible, regarded as a means of moral training. All Christians confess that morality is based on the sense of brotherhood. The Bible is also confessed by all Christians to be a book in which God reveals Himself by gradual stages as the Father of man, to whom He has proclaimed that they are His children and brothers one of another. One would have supposed, then, that the Bible, when placed in the hands of a teacher who recognises these fundamental truths, and who has also been trained to teach by gradual stages, would be confessed by all Christians to be the book above all others fittest to be a means of moral training. Yet there is a notion that in many elementary schools masters are hampered in teaching the Bible because they are forbidden to teach simultaneously disputed dogmas which they may believe to be deducible from it. "By all means," say certain people, "the Bible is *the* book for moral teaching; but only if *we* teach it"—the "we" representing always a small fraction, and often a very small fraction, of total Christendom. But do we not generally find that it is by vehement party politicians, or somewhat polemical ministers of religion, that these hampering difficulties of ours are so acutely felt for us, while we do not feel them ourselves? I venture to say, in the name of the great mass of masters of schools of the highest grade, and I believe I might go further and speak in the name of our united profession, that it is a source of strength and encouragement to us that, in giving Bible lessons, we are not compelled to make the Bible a basis for polemical theology, but are allowed so to teach it as to make its fundamental truths intelligible and applicable to the needs of daily duty.

(To be continued.)